

# **LECTIO DIVINA**

*Year 2020-2021*

***The WORD invites us  
to GIVE LIFE***

***to be***

***WOMEN evangelically fruitful***

## ***REFERENCE SOURCES:***

***Biblical passage***

***Magisterium of Pope Francis***

***Congregational Sources***

***General Chapter Document 2017***

**Rome, 8 September 2020**  
**Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

Dearest Sisters,

to each and every one the Franciscan greeting: “May the Lord give us Peace!”

In this time of pandemic so difficult for all humanity, let us continue together to present our invocations to the Lord, to implore his mercy, his protection for all.

His Word that nourishes and illuminates us in our daily life is the source from which to draw strength, faith and hope. The Lord’s fidelity nourishes our trusting abandonment in Him: “*Do not be afraid! I am with you every day ... “and supports our being”* consecrated “and” missionaries “in the midst of today’s humanity, so disoriented, in suffering and uncertainty.

***The Lectio divina of this year 2020-2021***, which follows the congregational theme “**GIVE LIFE**” is truly a “challenge” for each of us and for each fraternity: *How to give life in our time?*

The story of Salvation comes to our aid and in a particular way, in the Lectio Divina of this year, we will be accompanied by **WOMEN in the BIBLE**, who have been able to welcome the “ways of the Lord”, at times mysterious and incomprehensible, and have given their lives in the concrete situations they were living, with their human and spiritual capacities and with their specific gifts of being “**WOMEN**” and therefore sensitive, attentive and fruitful “**MOTHERS**”.

The call to evangelization is, especially for us consecrated women, a call to motherhood. The First Letter of Peter presents us with a very close relationship between the regeneration that took place through the Word that was announced to us and the evangelizing mission.

Participating in the work of evangelization means “giving life” and can therefore be considered a generative action: *“You have been regenerated by the Word of God, living and eternal ..., the word of the Gospel that has been announced to you”* (1 Pt 1 , 23-25). Regenerated by the Word, we are sent to *“proclaim the marvelous works of Him who called us from darkness to His admirable light”* (1 Pt 2,9).

The structure of the Lectio Divina, which has as its general theme: ***The Word invites us to GIVE YOUR LIFE to be evangelically FRUITFULL WOMEN***, is divided as follows:

- Brief Presentation of a woman in the Bible
- Biblical passage
- Texts from the magisterium of Pope Francis or from Congregational Sources, with references to the Chapter Document 2017 to help and guide in reflection and contemplation.

The People of God of Ancient Israel and New Israel which is the Church, lived and lives by the Word of the Lord. With Jesus the Savior, the Word became visible and became the Way, the Truth and the Life. In our formative journey of both personal and community fidelity let us give centrality to the Word, to Jesus, Word of the Father and like Mary *“Star of evangelization and Comforter of the afflicted, missionary disciple of her own Son Jesus”*, (From the message for the world mission day 2020) let us allow ourselves to be “fruitful” so as to learn ***to GIVE LIFE to the GOSPEL*** daily wherever we are and with whomever we share the beauty of our missionary vocation.

Good journey and good mission to all!

With affection

*General Superior*

*The sisters of the General Council*

## 1. SARAH: out of faith and with faith, receives and gives life

### Brief Presentation

Sarah is the “graceful barren” woman. Becoming a mother is “grace” humbly invoked in prayer. God can defeat sterility. He has the power to open the sterile womb and to offer the possibility of giving life. Everything is possible with God!



Even our life can remain sterile for a long time like Sara’s. Many things are done, a lot of commitment, work, organization but it is not generated to faith! Yet the Lord also has sons and daughters in store for us ... We are called to generate life.

### From the letter to the Hebrew (Hebrew 11: 8- 14)

*“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was to go.*

*By faith he sojourned in the promised land as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the same promise; for he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and maker is God.*

*By faith he received power to generate, even though he was past the normal age - and Sarah herself was sterile - for he thought that the one who had made the promise was trustworthy.*

*So it was that there came forth from one man, himself as good as dead, descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sands on the seashore.*

*All these died in faith. They did not receive what had been promised but saw it and greeted it from afar and acknowledged themselves to be strangers and aliens on earth, for those who speak thus show that they are seeking a homeland.”*

The Word of God

### **From a daily meditation of Pope Francis on the fecundity.**

That of the Christian must always be a “fruitful life” and the heart always open “to receive and give life”. A fecundity, “material or spiritual”, which always in the Bible “is a sign of God” and of His “blessing”, must give life. A person can also not be married, like priests and consecrated persons, but must live by giving life to others. Woe to us if we too are not fruitful with good works.

Our heart is a cradle. How is my heart? It is empty, always empty, but is it open continually to receive life and give life? To receive and be fruitful?

### **Evangelii Gaudium n 279**

*The ‘sense of mystery’ is knowing with certainty that whoever offers himself/ herself to God for love will surely be fruitful.*



## 2. MIRIAM: the prophetess dancing and singing for the wonders of the Lord

### Brief Presentation

Miriam is a woman full of enthusiasm for the Lord, who knows how to dance and sing, attracting others to rejoice in the wonders worked by God. Miriam has awaited the fulfillment of his Word. She trusted in the Lord, she had the courage to speak and act frankly: there is a need to rediscover Miriam's gift and to help the brothers and sisters to make an "exodus".



Let us ask that Miriam's passion for the Lord and His People live in us.

### From the book of Exodus (Ex. 14,31; 15,1-2, 20-21)

*When Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the seashore and beheld the great power that the LORD had shown against the Egyptians, they feared the LORD and believed in him and in his servant Moses.*

*Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: I will sing to the LORD, for he is gloriously triumphant; horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.*

*My strength and my courage is the LORD, and he has been my savior. He is my God, I praise him; the God of my father, I extol him.*

*The prophetess Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, while all the women went out after her with tambourines, dancing; and she led them in the refrain: Sing to the LORD, for he is gloriously triumphant; horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.*

The Word of God

## From the message of Pope Francis to the Pontifical Mission Societies (POM)

If one follows Jesus, happy to be attracted by him, others will take notice. They may even be astonished. The joy that radiates from those attracted by Christ and by his Spirit is what can make any missionary initiative fruitful.

### Chapter Document 2017 p. 34

*a. To be women of the Gospel and to make always renew our free, generous and enthusiastic response:*

- *we let Christ to be at the center of life and mission.*
- *we strive to be joyful witnesses in every situation and circumstance.*



### 3. ESTER: gives her life for the people with her prayer and intercession

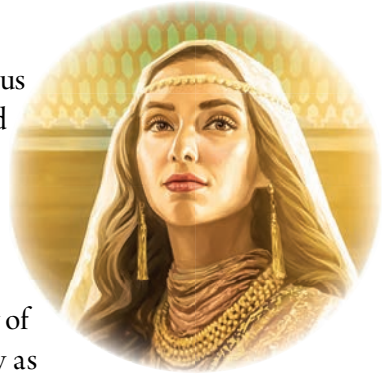
#### Brief Presentation

The story of Esther takes us to the sumptuous palaces of the king of Persia, where pomp and pleasure-seeking life is shown in a succession of interminable banquets and let us glimpse something of the life of foreigners, deportees, poor ...

Esther in fact, she carries the painful reality of the Jewish diaspora inscribed in her story as an orphan girl.

Esther stands out for beauty and virtue; she is a tender and feminine figure who saves her people from massacre, with the persuasive force of her intercession.

Let us invoke the Spirit of God to open our hearts to listening to His Word, give us eyes to see the needs of our brothers and sisters, a heart to share them, and great humility, faith and courage to put ourselves at the service of their liberation.



#### From the book of Ester (Ester 4:15- 16 ; C, 12-18; 23, 25.)

*Esther sent back to Mordecai the response: "Go and assemble all the Jews who are in Susa; fast on my behalf, all of you, not eating or drinking, night or day, for three days. I and my maids will also fast in the same way. Thus prepared, I will go to the king, contrary to the law. If I perish, I perish!"*

*Mordecai went away and did exactly as Esther had commanded...*

*Queen Esther, seized with mortal anguish, likewise had recourse to the Lord.*

*Taking off her splendid garments, she put on garments of distress and mourning.*

*In place of her precious ointments she covered her head with dirt and ashes.*

*She afflicted her body severely; all her festive adornments were put aside, and her hair was wholly disheveled.*

*Then she prayed to the Lord, the God of Israel, saying: «My Lord, our King, you alone are God. Help me, who am alone and have no help but you, for I am taking my life in my hand.*

*As a child I was used to hear from the people of the land of my forefathers that you, O Lord, chose Israel from among all peoples, and our fathers from among all their ancestors, as a lasting heritage, and that you fulfilled all your promises to them.*

*But now we have sinned in your sight, and you have delivered us into the hands of our enemies, because we worshiped their gods. You are just, O Lord!...*

*Be mindful of us, O Lord. Manifest yourself in the time of our distress and give me courage, King of gods and Ruler of every power. ...*

*Save us by your power, and help me, who am alone and have no one but you, O Lord. You know all things! » Quanto a noi, salvaci con la tua mano e vieni in mio aiuto, perché sono sola e non ho altri che te, Signore!>*

### The Word of God

#### From the message of Pope Francis for World Mission Day 2020

The prayer, in which God touches and moves our hearts, should make us ever more open to the need of our brothers and sisters for dignity and freedom, as well as our responsibility to care for all creation.

#### Chapter Document 2017 p. 36c

##### **c. To be women, apostles of the Gospel**

♦ *We let ourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit to courageously embark on new paths with today's humanity:*

~ *By giving our time, prayer, availability of heart in listening worries and hopes of families, youth and lonely old people;*

~ *By being open to the possibility of joining ecclesial structures or existing humanitarian organizations dealing with trafficking, prisons, immigrants, listening centers.*

## 4. RUTH: The DIVINE and BENEVOLENT PRESENCE of GOD

### Brief Presentation

The figure of Ruth represents the triumph of affections beyond religions. Ruth always travels. Indeed, once she arrives in the land of Bethlehem, it is above all there that her dynamism is manifested. The world of Ruth are



feelings, charity and kind mercy. As an ancestor - though a very distant one - of Jesus she anticipates what will be the cornerstone of the Saviour's doctrine "In the book of Ruth, otherness is not experienced as fear, danger, an obstacle to be discarded, but as the substance of love. God's name is mentioned several times, but God never speaks. It is the characters who talk about Him, indeed they do much more since Ruth, in particular, personifies the divine presence in the story and she becomes for Naomi the benevolent face of God and the instrument of His grace.

### From the book of Rut (*Rut 1: 15-20; 4: 13-17*)

*"See now!" Noemi said, "your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her god. Go back after your sister-in-law!" But Ruth said, "Do not ask me to abandon or forsake you! for wherever you go I will go, wherever you lodge I will lodge, your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Wherever you die I will die, and there be buried.*

*May the LORD do so and so to me, and more besides, if aught but death separates me from you!" Naomi then ceased to urge her, for she saw she was determined to go with her. So they went on together till they reached Bethlehem.*

*On their arrival there, the whole city was astir over them, and the women asked, "Can this be Naomi?" But she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi. Call me Mara, for the Almighty has made it very bitter for me!...*

*Boaz took Ruth. When they came together as man and wife, the LORD enabled her to conceive and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the LORD who has not failed to provide you today with an heir! May he become famous in Israel!*

*He will be your comfort and the support of your old age, for his mother is the daughter-in-law who loves you. She is worth more to you than seven sons!" Naomi took the child, placed him on her lap, and became his nurse.*

*And the neighbor women gave him his name, at the news that a grandson had been born to Naomi. They called him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.*

## The Word of God

### From the messages of Pope Francis

Missionary animation... living together with others, staying at their pace, asking to accompany them by learning to walk at their own pace. Only within the experiences of daily life, and not in the construction of artificial events and mobilizations, can the work of missionaries become fruitful. Only in this way, in the journey of everyday life, can a process of real inculturation of the Gospel be carried out in the various realities.

### Chapter Document 2017 p. 33

#### The fidelity of our "YES":

- *opens us up to the sense of universality, of internationality and of ecumenism that allows us to know and appreciate the various cultural models and different forms of religiosity.*

## 5. The WOMAN in love who SEARCHES, FINDS, PROCLAIMS

### Brief Presentation

The woman of the Canticle provokes us to live the present life more radically as a question of love, to remain faithful to the Beloved in the constant search for Him, who for us, consecrated and missionaries, is Jesus, our God and our All!

The Song of Songs celebrates the wonder of love, the power of life. If I do not want to give only my frustrations to those with whom I live, but to truly give life, I must cultivate the wonder of life, the wonder of love.



### From the Song of Songs (Songs 2,8-12; 3,1-4)

*Hark! my lover-here he comes springing across the mountains,  
leaping across the hills.*

*My lover is like a gazelle or a young stag. Here he stands behind our wall,  
gazing through the windows, peering through the lattices.*

*My lover speaks; he says to me, "Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one,  
and come! "For see, the winter is past, the rains are over and gone.*

*The flowers appear on the earth, the time of pruning the vines has come,  
and the song of the dove is heard in our land ...*

*At night I sought him whom my heart loves - I sought him but I did not find him.  
I will rise then and go about the city; in the streets and crossings I will seek Him  
whom my heart loves.*

*I sought him but I did not find him.*

*The watchmen came upon me as they made their rounds of the city:  
Have you seen him whom my heart loves?*

*I had hardly left them when I found him whom my heart loves. I took hold of him  
and would not let him go ...*

**The Word of God**

## From the Messages of Pope Francis

The dynamism of every *missionary movement proceeds by falling in love, by loving attraction.*

We do not follow Christ and much less do we become heralds of Him and His Gospel by a decision taken at a table.

Even the missionary impulse can only be fruitful if it occurs within this attraction and passes it on to others.

## Chapter Document 2017 p. 31

*Giving life is the vocational response, renewed in Christ, the Word of the Father, and with Him it becomes a daily self-offering, in spite of our fragilities.*



## 6. MARY: with FAITH, GIVES LIFE and PROCLAIMS SALVATION

### Brief Presentation

Messianic times begin properly with the “yes” of Mary, the Virgin Mother of the Lord. The singing of the Magnificat is set in the house of Zacharias. Elizabeth’s blessing comes as the first fruits of a song that will proclaim blessed the humble servant of the Lord for all generations. Mary echoes her cousin’s words, but she addresses the Lord directly: she brings



praise back to its source. Her joy eminently expresses the exultation of the messianic times, the experience of full salvation, the praise of the “great things” worked by the Powerful for her and for all those who fear him. To evangelize is to magnify God for the great works accomplished in us by His mercy. It is sharing an experience of salvation. It is singing our Magnificat.

### From the Gospel of Luke (Lk 1: 39-55)

*During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.*

*And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”*

*And Mary said: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness; behold, from now*

*on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."*

### The Word of the Lord

#### **From the message of Pope Francis to the Pontifical Mission Societies (POM)**

Imitate the ready spirit of Mary. When she visited Elizabeth, Mary did not do so on her own: she went as a servant of the Lord Jesus, whom she carried in her womb. She said nothing about herself, but simply brought her Son and praised God. It was not about her. She went as the servant of the One who is the sole protagonist of missionary activity. Nonetheless, she wasted no time, going in haste and doing what was needed to look after her kinswoman. She teaches us this same readiness, the haste born of fidelity and adoration.

#### **Chapter Document 2017 p. 34**

*To be women of the Gospel and to make always renew our free, generous and enthusiastic response:*

- *we offer our service with selfless love, apostolic zeal and Franciscan spirit in the missionary reality where we have been called, accepting and looking at it as a gift of God, certain that it was His choice for us.*
- *We remain available to accept the requests of our Superiors in the spirit of faith.*

## 7. MARY gives LIFES as she is attentive to recognize the SIGNS of TIME

### Brief Presentation

In this Gospel passage the mediating function of the Mother of Jesus clearly emerges: she presents to the Son the situation of need, our “lack of wine”, and teaches the servants, the Church, the appropriate attitude: “Do whatever he tells you “. Mary at Cana reveals not only Jesus, but also herself. She qualifies herself as a “woman” attentive to the situation, with eyes and heart open to the needs of others and immediately knows where to go, where to turn to solve the problem.



### From the Gospel of John (Jn. 2,1-11)

*On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.”*

*His mother said to the servers, “Do whatever he tells you.”*

*Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons.*

*Jesus told them, “Fill the jars with water.” So they filled them to the brim.*

*Then he told them, “Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.” So they took it. And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now.”*

*Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.*

The Word of the Lord

### **From the message of Pope Francis to the Pontifical Mission Societies (POM)**

It has always been the case that the proclamation of Jesus' salvation reaches people right where they are and just how they are in the midst of their lives in progress. Amid the needs, hopes and problems of everyday life we find the place where one who has acknowledged the love of Christ and received the gift of the Holy Spirit can offer an account of his or her faith, hope, and charity to those who ask for it ...

A missionary heart recognizes the real condition of real people, with their own limits, sins and frailties in order to become "weak among the weak".

### **Chapter Document 2017 p.33**

#### ***The fidelity of our "YES":***

- *challenges us to be more attentive to the signs of the times according to the guidelines of the Church and therefore to exercise in our evangelizing activity a profound discernment in favor of the poorest and needy.*



## 8. MARY GIVES HER LIFE WITH HER SON

### Brief Presentation

On the cross, Jesus reveals Himself as the Good Shepherd who gives His life for His sheep. Mary, fully associated with His offering, welcomes from Him the gift of ecclesial motherhood: “woman, here is your son”.

The Word of God invites to responsibility while waiting for the fulfillment of salvation. Our Church and we consecrated in it, are called to the admirable task of giving birth again to Christ and Christian values for humanity today.



### From the Gospel of John (Jn. 19:25-30)

*Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala.*

*When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.*

*After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I thirst.” There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth.*

*When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, “It is finished.” And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit.*

**The Word of the Lord**

## **From the message of Pope Francis for World Mission Day 2020**

In the sacrifice of the cross, where the mission of Jesus is fully accomplished, God shows us that his love is for each and every one of us. He asks us to be personally willing to be sent, because he himself is Love, love that is always “on mission”, always reaching out in order to give life. Out of his love for us, God the Father sent his Son Jesus.

Jesus is the Father’s Missionary: his life and ministry reveal his total obedience to the Father’s will. Jesus, crucified and risen for us, draws us in turn into his mission of love, and with his Spirit which enlivens the Church, he makes us his disciples and sends us on a mission to the world and to its peoples.

## **Chapter Document 2017 p.35**

### ***To be women, witnesses of the Gospel:***

- *We commit ourselves to follow the poor and crucified Christ by making concrete choices of life and consoling the poor not only in words but also in works of charity.*



## 9. The SAMARITAN WOMAN:

**Allow oneself to be transformed by  
the SPIRIT of CHRIST To be WITNESSES everywhere**

### Brief Presentation

John the Evangelist presents Jesus' conversation with the woman of Samaria in the framework of a large section that opens and ends at Cana in Galilee. This section is characterized by the first revelation of Jesus through "signs" and "dialogues", and by the response of faith of some people such as his disciples, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, etc.



We too want to meet Jesus as the woman of Samaria and allow ourselves to be led by Him towards the truth, towards the full understanding of ourselves and of Him. Only in this way will we be able to give ourselves and announce Him as true disciples and missionaries.

### From the Gospel of John (Jn 4:5-7, 9- 15, 19- 27, 28-29)

*Jesus came to a town of Samaria called Sychar... tired from his journey, sat down there at the well. It was about noon. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." The Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" (For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." (The woman) said to him, "Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?"*

*Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall*

give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. "The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." ...

The woman said to him, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain; but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Anointed; when he comes, he will tell us everything." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking with you." The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people, "Come see a man who told me everything I have done.

**The Word of the Lord**

### **From the message of Pope Francis to the Pontifical Mission Societies (POM)**

The Spirit enkindles and enlivens the Church's mission, bestowing all those individual accents and styles that make the proclamation of the Gospel and the confession of the Christian faith something different from all political, cultural, psychological or religious forms of proselytism.

### **Chapter Document 2017 p. 37**

*We form ourselves to make individual and community choices to build the culture of peace, tolerance, justice and respect and care of creation:*

- *By promoting the education of heart and mind of the new generations in our different ministries.*

## 10. THE POOR WIDOW: GIVE EVERYTHING without CALCULATION and with GRATITUDE

### Brief Presentation

The episode represents an appropriate conclusion of the whole public ministry of Jesus, who did nothing but announce the need for total openness to the coming kingdom of God.

At the same time, it prepares the account of the Passion, in which it will appear that it was Jesus who gave his whole life for the salvation of humanity.

The widow who gives all her life is a key to understanding the logic of Jesus who is going to Jerusalem, for the supreme gift of Himself.

Following Him requires knowing how to give everything.



### From the Gospel of Mark (Mk. 12: 41-44)

*He sat down opposite the treasury and observed how the crowd put money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums.*

*A poor widow also came and put in two small coins worth a few cents.*

*Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them, "Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury.*

*For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood."*

The Word of the Lord

## From the message of Pope Francis to the Pontifical Mission Societies (POM)

The loving predilection of God surprises us, and surprise by its very nature cannot be owned or imposed by us. One cannot be “necessarily surprised”.

Only in this way can the miracle of gratuitousness, the gratuitous gift of self, blossom. Nor can missionary fervour ever be obtained as the result of reasoning or calculation.

To be “in a state of mission” is a reflection of gratitude. It is the response of one who by gratitude is made docile to the Spirit and is therefore free.

### Chapter Document 2017 p. 34

*Every little gesture of love is life giving, is to witness and to announce the Redemptive Love of Jesus (cf. Const. 55).*

*We feel the need to give simple but true answers, without measure, that respond with the gratitude of evangelically fruitful women. (cf. Const. 21,2)*



## 11. MARY of BETHANY: THE SCENT OF A TOTALLY DONATED LIFE

### Brief Presentation

The gesture of Mary of Bethany who pours all her precious perfume on the feet of the Lord makes us understand that those who love do not play to save, since the logic of love is not to know measure but to give everything. While the people around are amazed at so much waste, Jesus appreciates and we understand why: waste says the measure of love. We too are objects of the “waste” by God. He pours all the perfumed oil of His love on us.



### From the Gospel of John (Jn. 12,1-8)

*Six days before Passover Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.*

*They gave a dinner for him there, and Martha served, while Lazarus was one of those reclining at table with him.*

*Mary took a liter of costly perfumed oil made from genuine aromatic nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and dried them with her hair; the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.*

*Then Judas the Iscariot, one (of) his disciples, and the one who would betray him, said, “Why was this oil not sold for three hundred days’ wages and given to the poor?”*

*He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief and held the money bag and used to steal the contributions.*

*So Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Let her keep this for the day of my burial.*

*You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.”*

**The Word of the Lord**

## **From the homely of the archbishop of Udine on 21 April 1861**

Oh! the prayer that comes out of the hearts of these spouses of Christ, like a cloud of fragrant perfumes, rises lightly up to the throne of God, and then descends as a beneficial rain of mercies and graces. Blessed are those places, blessed are those provinces, blessed are those cities, in whose custody these righteous souls continually watch, who ... attract the blessings of heaven to earth!

## **Chapter Document 2017 2017 p.32**

### ***The joy of our “YES”:***

- *comes from feeling loved by God the Father who makes us free to love Christ in the Spirit and in His living flesh, who is the person of our time and of all time. (Pope Francis –homily)*
- *is nourished through prayer, listening to the Word of God, the Eucharistic Celebration.*
- *is enriched by the availability to sacrifice, labor, and challenges; and the offering of illness and suffering.*



## 12. MARTHA: the WOMAN that BELIEVES and PROCLAIMS

### Brief Presentation

Martha takes a journey in her experience of faith. This experience of her is an interpretation of the meaning of life and death. Faith first took place in communication and then in the sign. She believed before the miracle. Jesus revealed Himself to Martha, and Martha in her confession of faith revealed who Jesus is for her. Not only that, Martha tells Jesus what He did not say about Himself. The Johannine tradition has condensed in this formula, in the mouth of a woman, a series of titles that express the community's interpretation of Jesus: the Lord, the Christ, the Son of God, the One who is to come. Martha therefore appears as a true disciple of Jesus, a theologian, a woman who interprets the Word.



### From the Gospel of John (Jn. 11:17-27)

*When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away. And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home.*

*Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died, but even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise."*

*Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."*

*Do you believe this?"*

*She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world."*

## The Word of the Lord

### From the Messages of Pope Francis

The man or woman who has faith entrusts himself/herself to God: he/she trusts ... To God! To the Lord Jesus! Trust: and this leads us to hope. Just as confession of faith leads us to adoration and praise of God, entrusting ourselves to God leads us to an attitude of hope. There are many Christians with a hope...not strong: a weak hope. Why? Because they don't have the strength and the courage to entrust themselves to the Lord. But if we Christians believe by confessing the faith, also by taking care of the faith, and by entrusting ourselves to God, to the Lord, we will be victorious Christians. And this is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith!

### Chapter Document 2017 p. 35

#### *To be women, witnesses of the Gospel*

- *We live the concreteness of everyday life by faithfully accepting joys and difficulties, conquests and failures of our personal, communal and apostolic life.*



## 13. WOMEN WITNESSES in suffering and joy!

### Brief Presentation

In his Gospel, Luke informs us that during the unfolding of the events of the Passion of Jesus there were present the women who were following Jesus from Galilee. He names the three who went to the tomb on Saturday and offers further information by saying that in addition to the three of them there were also “other women” (he does not tell us the names, however) who were together. So, he lets us understand that the group of pious women who go to the Holy Sepulcher was more numerous.

In them, we can see the communion and the strength of fraternity that knows how to share events of suffering and joy.



### From the Gospel of Luke (Lk 23: 54-56; 24: 1-10)

*It was the day of preparation, and the sabbath was about to begin.*

*The women who had come from Galilee with Jesus followed behind (Joseph of Arimathea) and when they had seen the tomb and the way in which his body was laid in it, they returned and prepared spices and perfumed oils. Then they rested on the sabbath according to the commandment. But at daybreak on the first day of the week they took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb; but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were puzzling over this, behold, two men in dazzling garments appeared to them.*

*They were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground. They said to them, “Why do you seek the living one among the dead?”*

*He is not here, but he has been raised. Remember what he said to you while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners and be crucified, and rise on the third day.”*

*And they remembered his words. Then they returned from the tomb and announced all these things to the eleven and to all the others.*

*The women were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James; the others who accompanied them also told this to the apostles,*

### The Word of the Lord

## **From the message of Pope Francis to the Pontifical Mission Societies (POM)**

The joy of the Gospel is that “great joy” of the poor women who on Easter morning went to the tomb of Christ, found it empty, then encountered the risen Jesus and run home to tell the others (cf. Mt 28:8-10). Only because we have been chosen and singled out can we bear witness to the glory of the risen Christ before the entire world.

### **Chapter Document 2017 P 33 e 35**

#### ***The strength of our “YES”:***

- *is supported by our life in fraternity through the care of our relationships, with concrete gestures of affection that can express, like the Blessed Virgin Mary, the maternal tenderness in many situations of life.*
- *is manifested in bringing the Holy Gospel into our and others' sacred history.*

#### ***To be women, witnesses of the Gospel***

- *We support each other as sisters, open to listen and to meet on a path of conversion of the heart and gaze to learn to look at one another with God's tenderness and feeling responsible for the faithful response of every sister who is next to us.*

## 14. MARY of MAGDALA: experience of the RISEN ONE and HER PROCLAMATION

### Brief Presentation

From the beginning of Christ's mission, women show a special sensitivity towards Him and towards His mystery which corresponds to a characteristic of femininity. It must also be said that this finds particular confirmation in relation to the paschal mystery, not only at the moment of the cross, but also at the dawn of the resurrection.

Mary of Magdala was the eyewitness of the risen Christ before the apostles and, for this reason, she was also the first to bear witness to Him and to be called the apostle of the apostles.

We contemplate Mary of Magdala at the feet of the Risen One and then as she runs to give the good news to the community of disciples. We entrust to her, the "apostle of the apostles", our commitment of evangelization.



### From the Gospel of John (Jn. 20:11-18)

*Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping. And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb and saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been.*

*And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken my Lord, and I don't know where they laid him."*

*When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" She thought it was the gardener and said to him, "Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him."*

*Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni," which means Teacher. Jesus said to her, "Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary of Magdala went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and what he told her.*

**The Word of the Lord**

### **From the message of Pope Francis for World Mission Day 2020**

Mission is a free and conscious response to God's call. Yet we discern this call only when we have a personal relationship of love with Jesus present in his Church... Are we willing to be sent forth at any time or place to witness to our faith in God the merciful Father, to proclaim the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ, to share the divine life of the Holy Spirit by building up the Church? ...

This interior openness is essential if we are to say to God: "Here am I, Lord, send me". And this, not in the abstract, but in this chapter of the life of the Church and of history.

### **Chapter Document 2017 p.32**

*On the day of our profession as FMSC we were asked to offer our life to witness Christ with our words and deeds and to announce to all peoples the redemptive love of Jesus crucified everywhere we are sent as missionaries in the world (cfr. Ritual of Religious Profession; cf. Const. 59).*



*Prayers of invocation  
before the  
Lectio Divina*

1. Lord, we thank you because you have gathered us in your presence to make us listen to your Word: in it you reveal your love to us and you make us know your will. Make every other voice that is not your own be silenced in us; send your Holy Spirit to open our minds and to heal and enlighten our hearts. Only in this way will our encounter with your Word be a renewal of the covenant and communion with you and the Son and the Holy Spirit, God blessed for ever and ever. Amen.
2. Our Father, here we are, listening to your living and efficacious Word: it will penetrate us as a double-edged sword and in the power of your Holy Spirit call us to conversion, transform our lives and make us disciples of Jesus Christ, your Son. He who is your Word made flesh, your face and your image. Be blessed now and forever and ever. Amen.
3. You wanted, O Father that at the Angel's Annunciation the Immaculate Virgin conceived your eternal Word, and filled with the light of the Holy Spirit would become the temple of the new covenant: make us adhere humbly to your will, like the Virgin who trusted in your Word. For our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who is God, and lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit for all ages and ages. Amen

4. Lord Jesus Christ, today your light shines in us, source of life and joy!  
Send the Spirit of love and truth, so that we may discover and interpret in the light of the Word, the signs of your divine presence in our world. May we welcome these signs in faith that we may always live in the joy of your presence among us. Amen
  
5. Come Holy Spirit the Consoler; fill our life with your light so we can be witnesses of the crucified and risen Christ.  
Come in our midst, and may we remember the words of Jesus. Come in our midst, and inspire us with Jesus' thoughts. Come Holy Comforter Spirit, come here today and always in our existence, make fruitful our life with the strength of your Word, so that we can give birth to the Word of God and offer Him to the world. Amen
  
6. Our God, Father of light, you have sent your Word into the world, wisdom out of your mouth, that has taken dominion over all the peoples of the earth. You wanted your own Son, eternal Word with you, to become flesh and place his tent between us.  
Send us the Holy Spirit now to give us a heart capable of listening and allow us to meet him in these holy Scriptures and generate the Word in us.  
Your Holy Spirit leads us to the truth, give us intelligence and perseverance. We ask this for Christ, our Lord, blessed for ever and ever. Amen!"
  
7. O God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you love and want to save all your children: pour out on us that Spirit with whom you consecrated Jesus and sent Him to announce the good news to the poor.

Give us the intelligence of the Gospel and of people so that we can bring Jesus to all our brothers and sisters, helping them to meet Him who is the only Saviour.

O Virgin Mary, of deep listening, make us docile disciples of the Word. Invoke the Spirit with us to descend and renew the face of the earth. Amen.

8. Spirit of truth, sent by Jesus to guide us to the whole truth, enlighten our minds so that we may understand the Scriptures. You, who overshadowed Mary and made her fruitful ground where the Word of God could germinate, purify our hearts from all obstacles to the Word.  
Help us to learn like her to listen with good and pure hearts to the Word that God speaks to us in life and in Scripture, so that we may observe the Word and produce good fruit through our perseverance. Amen



**PRAYERS**  
**to conclude**  
**LECTIO DIVINA**



1. O Jesus, divine Missionary, consumed by zeal for the glory of your Father and the redemption of souls, you made of yourself an announcer and propagator of that Kingdom of holiness and grace. Grant us a ray of your spirit, which teaches us to give ourselves without reserve, to be understanding without weakness, firm and resolute without harshness, discrete and prudent without vain fears of the world and its judgments.  
 Infuse your light, to discover the needs of people; your warmth and your strength, so as not to fail in the face of coldness or obstacles, the gentle efficacy of your grace, to move hearts and gently guide them to you. Amen
  
2. We want to come after you, Jesus.  
 We want to continue to follow you, step by step, on the Way of the Cross bearing in our hearts every brother and sister as friends.  
 We want to be your faithful friends but you, Lord Jesus, do not let us leave grab by fear and fatigue.  
 In flame the ardor of your Spirit in us to adhere to You and with you, to give life to all by virtue of that greater love which embraces every creature. Amen.
  
3. Jesus, Divine Master, who came down from heaven to give the abundance of Grace, increase it in us and make it become a river that overflows into eternal life.

The fire enkindled by your love gives us the strength to follow the invitation to the infinite perfection of the Father.

Grant us the firmness of faith; the ardour of charity, the certainty of unshakable hope.

Give us the desire of heroism in every virtue and the confidence to reach holiness, with the help of Your Mother and yours.  
Amen

4. Come Holy Spirit and remove every obstacle that separates us from fraternal love, make those behaviors that divide hearts disappear, annihilate all jealousy, envy, slander, rancor ...

Put in our heart a spark of goodness, tenderness, trust, positivity, optimism. Let us learn the international language of peace and mutual forgiveness.

Make us humble, welcoming, helpful and respectful people. Give us the joy of understanding that our only happiness it is in loving as God loves us. Amen (*don A. Saporiti*)

5. Hail Mary, Woman of the New Covenant, we call you blessed because you have believed (cf. Lk 1:45) and have known how to “recognize the traces of God’s Spirit in events great and small.”

You sustain our watching in the night, until the light of dawn anticipates the new day. Grant us a prophet’s voice to tell the world about the joy of the Gospel, about the blessedness of those who search the horizons of new lands and heavens and anticipate their presence in the human city.

Help us to proclaim the fecundity of the Spirit under the banner of the essential and the small. Grant that we may perform, here and now, the courageous act of the humble, upon whom God looks and to whom are revealed the secrets of the Kingdom  
Amen.

6. We want to give you life, Lord Jesus!

We want that our energies, our natural passion for life, our desire to love become instruments of salvation, a gratuitous and free announcement of your presence that gives life, new fullness.

Call us, Lord, even today, as in all times ... And may our yes be free and generous! Amen

7. Mary, Virgin and Mother, you who, moved by the Holy Spirit, welcomed the word of life in the depths of your humble faith:

as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One, help us to say our own “yes” to the urgent call, as pressing as ever, to proclaim the good news of Jesus...

Star of the new evangelization, help us to bear radiant witness to communion, service, ardent and generous faith, justice and love of the poor, that the joy of the Gospel may reach to the ends of the earth, illuminating even the fringes of our world.

Mother of the living Gospel, wellspring of happiness for God’s little ones, pray for us. Amen. Alleluia!

*(Pope Francis)*

8. Thank you, Jesus Good Shepherd, for having called us to be with you, for having called us to follow you in your loving obedience to the Father’s plan.

Thank you for associating us with your mission of evangelization and salvation! Help us not to flinch.

Do not allow, Lord Jesus, that after following you we fall back on our little problems and interests.

Free us from living for ourselves.

Help us to remain open to listening to your Word, available to the challenges of our time, capable of discerning your Will in the signs of the times, in the often unspoken questions of the people you send us to.

Teach us to speak with the Father and to speak of His love to our brothers and sisters.

Revive in us the gift of your Spirit so that we allow ourselves to be fully guided by Him in everyday life. Amen



